



Children's Mental Health Collective Impact Resiliency Workgroup

Children who develop resilience are better able to manage stress and feelings of anxiety. More generally, developing resilience creates a social and emotional foundation for learning, developing relationships, development, and general well-being.

In 2017, workgroup members presented across the state on the importance of developing resilience within a child's ecological system which includes the child, adults surrounding the child, communities holding the family, and organizations within the community. A take-away message is the transformative power of a resilience in creating stronger individuals, families, communities, and organizations.

Key Activities

- Promote resilience by creating community awareness of skills, experiences, and resources that create resilience in children and families.
- Develop a web-based toolkit with resources including research, video links, and presentation materials.
- Promote organizational resilience to support the workforce (see below).

Workgroup Values

Experience a sense of belonging & connection through relationships & supports.

Foster our inner strengths & hopes.

Nurture positive qualities in self & others.

Mentor for success & self-determination.

Find strength & value in my journey.

Children



Children learn skills related to resilience through relationships with supportive adults and by engaging in opportunities for learning and creativity.

Family



Adults who regularly interact with children are the most powerful lever for creating a child's positive attitudes, beliefs and behaviors.

Community



Community members, who have interest and involvement in a child's life, who listen without judgement can build resilience in children and families.

Organizations



Organizations can increase employee productivity and satisfaction by valuing and empowering staff, and promoting a positive, strength-based workplace.

Culture



Honoring cultural differences in the definition and display of resilience is critical. Resilience grows when children access their own and other cultures.

Resiliency Workgroup Indicators

The Resiliency Workgroup will track success by using the following measurements:



Flourishing behaviors



Percent of children with an adult mentor



Percent of adults with positive mental health



Creating Organizational Resilience

- Educate leadership on the importance of resilience and have them lead by example.
- Create a safe and supportive work environment.
- Encourage employees to support their well-being.
- Develop policies and practices that empower employees to build resilience. Build organizational resilience through trauma-informed care transformation.

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Tipping the Scale

Wisconsin's future success relies on the health and well-being of our children. To ensure new generations of productive, conscientious citizens, we must counter any negative experiences that cause toxic stress with protective factors. The Office of Children's Mental Health is using the metaphor of a scale² to think of the course of a child's development. A scale has two ways to tip the balance, the counterbalance and the fulcrum or balancing point. In the metaphor, the positive experiences or protective factors, are loaded on to one side of the scale while the challenges or risk factors are on the other side. If the scale is loaded with positive experiences (not all experiences hold the same weight) the scale tips in a positive direction. A person with a scale tipped toward the negative side has increased risk of negative health outcomes.

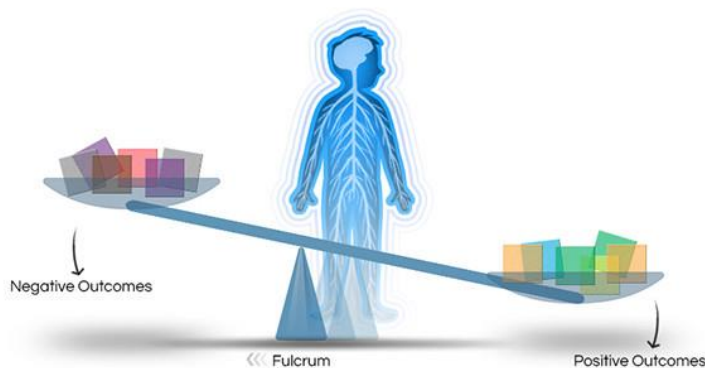
The Role of Genes

The second way to tip the scale is to move the fulcrum. Besides experiences, genes also play a role. In this metaphor the fulcrum represents the genetic inheritance of a person. Some people are born more susceptible to toxic stress and others are less affected. Research into epigenetics has found that the fulcrum is not permanently set. There are pivotal times in a child's development when experiences can modify how genes are expressed. These times, such as the first five years of a child's life, the passage to adolescence and the transition to adulthood, are critical periods where intervention has a greater impact on long-term well-being. Leveraging resources to enhance supports at these critical times is a wise investment in our children's future.

The Community's Role

A child's community plays an important role. The network of community relationships, environments and opportunities all lay the groundwork for the next generation. Parents play key roles in a child's life, and other adults can as well. An attentive child care provider, teacher, coach or neighbor can bolster a child's resilience against toxic stress. We can change the trajectory of the next generation by increasing broad-based understanding in communities around the importance of a child's social and emotional development, and bolstering resources for children and families.

Tipping the scale towards positive outcomes by ensuring that families and youth have access to appropriate and quality supports and services



Resilience in Action

- **Communities:** Parents run peer groups based on the [Protective Factors](#). The protective factors framework provides guidance on attributes of individuals, families and communities that increase the health and well-being of children and families.
- **Early Care and Education:** Child care providers often build resilience in children through fulfilling more than their basic needs. Through nurturing relationship-based care they give children learning opportunities in safe and responsive environments that support children's social emotional growth and needs.
- **Schools:** Teachers communally reviewed a list of all students in their school, identified which students didn't have a strong connection with any teacher, and made the effort to get to know those students so every child had a connection to an adult at the school.
- **Organizations:** Individuals and leaders commit to self-care, including taking lunch breaks, holding walking meetings, and checking in with their co-workers.
- **Government:** County and state agencies changed language on their intake and assessment forms, including questions about resilience. This new, positive framing, allowed agencies to see the strengths in the families they serve.

1. Kendall-Taylor, Nathaniel. (2012). The Resilience Scale: Using Metaphor to Communicate a Developmental Perspective on Resilience. Washington, DC: FrameWorks Institute.